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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001036

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV NI

SUBJECT: SENATE PRESIDENT FORESEES DELAYED ELECTIONS

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a July 13 conversation with the Consul General, Senate President Ken Nnamani claimed he diplomatically resisted pressure to facilitate President Obasanjo's push for a third-term. Considering President Obasanjo's tenure extension diathesis, the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) lack of momentum, People's Democratic Party (PDP) disarray, and unrest in the Niger Delta, Nnamani foresees some or all of these reasons converging to delay elections, thus indirectly giving Obasanjo what he craves--additional time in office. Saying he consults with Obasanjo regularly, Nnamani avouched he will recommend to President Obasanjo the Federal Government marshal developmental resources to defuse Delta unrest. Lastly, the Senate President expressed concern over Chris Uba's violent activities in Anambra State, and his efforts to undermine Governor Obi. END SUMMARY.

Nnamani Heavily Pressured to Support 3rd term

¶2. (C) In a July 13 discussion with the Consul General, Senate President Nnamani (PDP-Enugu) said he was offered a large sum of naira and even an oil block to navigate President Obasanjo's third term bid through the Senate. In exchange for these emoluments, Nnamani would have to forego on the vote count in the Senate and use his position to announce an affirmative decision after a voice vote. The Presidency was pushing him to conduct in decretal form what was inherently a legislative function, thus subverting the Senate as an institution, Nnamani expounded. Despite these offers and pressure from the Presidency to eject journalists from covering Senate deliberations on the third term, Nnamani refused. Nnamani said he explained to the President and his votaries that he did not object to their goals but that he could not unilaterally decide on a voice vote nor evict the media. If so, his Senate member colleagues would perceive such actions as an arrogation of power. Not only would they seek to upbraid him, their negative reaction would also

incline them against the President's tactic and the ultimate objective of passing the amendment. Nnamani said he sidestepped the President's overtures for a voice vote and media ejection by stating he would back them if another Senator would successfully move both topics for consideration by the whole chamber. Because he knew both measures were so unpopular that no Senator would deign to utter such a motion, he knew he had successfully killed both measures without having openly opposed the President, Nnamani chuckled.

¶3. (C) After the crash and burn of the third term, Obasanjo realized he had been poorly served by his political advisors, Nnamani claimed. Now, Obasanjo was more amenable to listen to advice from independent voices like Nnamani, who claimed that, throughout the amendment saga, he told Obasanjo that the amendment lacked sufficient support to carry.

Obasanjo not ready to depart office; PDP Kept in Disarray

¶4. (C) According to Nnamani, tenure extension is Obasanjo's ide fixe. With the constitutional amendment for now garroted, Obasanjo is looking to less direct means to remain in office beyond May 29, 2007. One plausible avenue remains through a delayed or bungled election process. Nnamani considers the general disarray surrounding the 2007 Presidential and state elections as indicative of Obasanjo's machinations to extend his term. Nnamani pointed out INEC is much farther behind now than it was at the comparable point in the 2003 electoral season. Despite the President allegedly having signed the election bill weeks ago, Nnamani said the Presidency has failed to return the law for final publication. By not returning the signed law, the President is delaying INEC's preparations for the election as no funds

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can be allocated to INEC until the law is published. Nnamani views rancorous PDP in-fighting at both national and state levels as compounding the electoral disarray. Despite these observations, Nnamani offered no additional insight into possible regrouping or fractioning of the PDP.

¶5. (C) Nnamani stated instability in the Niger Delta region could also allow Obasanjo to push or extend his Presidency. Nnamani feared elections would not be held on schedule if the Delta states or any significant part thereof were enmeshed in civil turmoil. To forestall such turmoil, he would recommend to Obasanjo that the Federal Government marshal resources in the Delta region to initiate short-term development projects to mollify the militant groups during the election season.

Anambra in a Downward spiral?

¶5. (C) According to Nnamani, violence in Anambra is the handiwork of PDP Chieftain Chris Uba. Uba is backing militias and unions to undermine and discredit Anambra State Governor Obi. Influence with President Obasanjo has emboldened Uba to believe he can misbehave with impunity in the state, Nnamani decried. Finally, Nnamani considered Uba a greater menace than just to Anambra. Uba is on a track to implant his cronies in office throughout the South-East. If he succeeded, this would effect a severe diminution in Igbo politics and the governance of the South-East, warned Nnamani.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Nnamani's supposition that Obasanjo is still fixed on extending his hold on the Presidency has merit and is being echoed by many Nigerians. Nnamani is in no hurry to see Obasanjo stay. He must know that Obasanjo does not consider him an ally and Obasanjo has made political

mince-meat out of Nnamni's predecessors once they fell from Presidential grace. Ironically, because of his role in the third term saga, Nnamani's standing among Obasanjo's opponents has appreciated. His name is now being mentioned as a Vice Presidential possibility. Although he might not have instigated it, this talk will place him further at odds with the President. END COMMENT.

BROWNE